



**VLGA**

Victorian  
Local Government  
Association

# Councillor Professional Development Program

# Setting Victoria's Councillors up for Success

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The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) is the peak body for Victorian councillors and Victoria's councillor support network.

The VLGA supports councils and elected representatives to deliver positive outcomes for their local communities through high performance leadership and effective governance. We are member-run and non-partisan.

For more than three decades we have provided practical support, professional development and policy guidance to councils, inspiring and enabling good governance and supporting elected representatives across their journey from candidacy to end-of-term.

The VLGA is the only organisation with a singular focus on supporting councillors and the people who work with them to change culture, improve conduct and demonstrate good local governance.

We are a trusted advisor to the sector and remain focused on leadership development, skills training and inspiring and enabling participatory, inclusive and ethical decision-making.

We are pleased to offer our *Councillor Professional Development Program*, which aligns with the Victorian Government requirements for mandatory councillor training during the duration of their four-year term.

## Mandatory Councillor Professional Development Requirements

It is a requirement under the *Local Government Act 2020* for all councillors to complete ongoing professional development training. All councillors must satisfy the obligations set out in the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* during the duration of their council term.

The Victorian Government has provided guidance on what professional development needs to be completed by councillors during both their induction period and in Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 of this council term.



# The VLGA's Councillor Professional Development Program

The VLGA's *Councillor Professional Development Program* has been developed around the following themes outlined in the reforms introduced by the Victorian Government in October 2024.

The themes to be covered are:

- Working together as a Council
- Decision-making, integrity and accountability
- Community Representation
- Strategic Planning and Financial Management
- Conduct
- Land Use Planning

We understand that councils are being asked to do more, with less, and that councillors already devote on average almost 30 hours a week to council duties. This is why the VLGA has developed a program which aligns with the mandatory guidelines and does so in a cost effective and time proficient way.

Upon request, the VLGA can also work with councils to develop and deliver bespoke modules, specific to the professional needs of individual councils and councillors.

By participating in the VLGA's Professional Development Program, we ensure councillors are proactive learners and have the skills and

information they need to deliver great outcomes for the communities they represent.

The VLGA professional development programs increase both councillor confidence and competence in their role, help easily identify knowledge gaps and tailor learning opportunities and experiences to the direct learning needs of councillors.

To further assist councils in navigating the mandatory professional development requirements for councillors, the VLGA has developed a Professional Development Policy. This policy will guide councils across Victoria on how to implement the mandatory requirements in a way that best suits their councillors' learning needs.

The VLGA will keep attendance records at all sessions and provide a report to the Chief Executive Officer attesting to the completion of the professional development training by each councillor and how it aligns with the mandatory requirements.

VLGA members enjoy discounted prices on our sector-leading programs. Through our ongoing professional development workshops and seminars, our members are armed with the knowledge and skills to perform at their best and with good governance as their foundation.

# Recommended Training Schedule

Module	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Renewing councillor group commitment to work as a team				
Effectively participating in Council Meetings				
CEO recruitment and performance management				
Financial and Risk Management				
Effective Strategic Planning				
Key integrity and accountability requirements				
Representing the diversity, interests and needs of the community				
Effective Communication				
Creating and maintaining a safe workplace				
Introduction to other legislative responsibilities				
Victorian Planning System				
Statutory Planning				
Preventing Fraud and Corruption				
Council and its elected roles				
Responding to the needs of the municipality				
Councillor Conduct Framework				
Decision making and good governance				

# Our Learning Approach

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VLGA applies a blended learning approach to meet the needs of councils and councillors that facilitates the sharing of lived experiences and expertise.

Our *Councillor Professional Development Program* follows the same design principles that informed our *Councillor Readiness Program* for councillor induction.

- **Face to Face Learning** - experiential, immersive workshops
- **Virtual workshops** - virtual labs offering flexibility
- **Peer learning** - collaborative forums and group discussions
- **Reflective learning** - self-assessment, coaching and mentoring

VLGA's thirty-year commitment to good governance in Local Government, means all of our training sessions are grounded in our belief in representative democracy, intersectional diversity and inclusion, the importance of collective learning and decision making, civility and transparency.

## Our Trainers

VLGA training facilitators are subject matter experts with lived experience in local government and policy.



# Intensive Workshops

Through intensive small group delivery, facilitated by subject matter experts from across the sector, VLGA intensive workshops are both efficient for councillors and affordable for councils.

These sessions have been designed to cover the 13 modules outlined within the mandatory guidelines for the first year of the term, combining them into six half-day sessions.

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## Working Together as a Team

**Friday 1 August 2025**  
**9:00am - 12:30pm**

This session will renew the councillor group commitment to work as a team. Councillors will reflect on ways to work better together, their responsibilities and obligations under legislation, as well as how to best overcome conflict.

This session will look at councillors' role in CEO recruitment and performance management, in line with organisational performance and accountability, as well as the importance of the CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy.

## Decision-making, integrity and accountability

**Friday 1 August 2025**  
**1:30pm - 5:00pm**

This session will give councillors an understanding of meeting procedures and governance rules, including how to read and understand agendas and other briefing papers to enable them to make the best decisions in good governance.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of how to engage in effective and respectful debate, negotiation practices and gain the skills to effectively chair Council Meetings.

Building on from the *Councillor Readiness Program* (the VLGA's councillor induction program), this session will look at councillor conduct and what happens when things go wrong. We will dive further into the managing confidential information and conflicts of interest, and supporting good governance. Councillors will also gain an understanding of the regulatory bodies that work to prevent fraud and corruption in the sector.



## Community Representation

**Friday 22 August 2025**  
**9:00am - 12:30pm**

This session will look at the diversity of the community councillors serve, and council's obligations when it comes to key issues affecting the community.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of meaningful community engagement and its importance in the decision-making process.

This module will take councillors through the fundamentals of occupational health and safety and psychosocial hazards. It will look at ways to prevent and address sexual harassment, including the importance of diversity and Inclusion.

Participants will be taken through ways to appropriately manage conflict and disputes, including processes under the councillor conduct framework.

## Effective Communication

**Friday 22 August 2025**  
**1:30pm - 5:00pm**

This session will look at how councillors engage with the media, including council's media and social media policies.

It will include appropriate use of social media, as well as skills and knowledge in effective public speaking, including speaking at a council meeting or speaking to the media and presentation skills.

## Land Use Planning

**Friday 12 September 2025**  
**9:00am - 12:30pm**

This session will look at the role of council's Planning Scheme and its impacts.

It will take councillors through powers of delegation and the processes to trigger the determination of applications by council.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of policies and processes related to interactions with developers, planning applicants and their representatives and objectors.

Councillors will look at the fundamentals of the Victorian planning system, including:

- The planning scheme and amendments
- Planning Permits
- Reviews and the role of VCAT
- The role of the planning minister and other bodies such as Planning Panels Victoria
- Statutory Planning

## Strategic Planning and Financial Management

**Friday 12 September 2025**  
**1:30pm - 5:00pm**

This module will build on the information, knowledge and skills relating to strategic planning addressed during induction.

Councillors will also gain knowledge and skills relating to strategic planning such as:

- Setting and measuring outcomes
- Service planning, innovation and continuous improvement
- Collaborating with other agencies such as other councils, governments and statutory bodies and regional, state and national plans and policies
- Municipal public health and wellbeing plans

This module will focus on effective financial and risk management and will build on the information, knowledge and skills relating to financial and risk management addressed during induction.

In addition, councillors will gain knowledge and skills relating to financial and risk management such as asset management and setting rates.



# Bespoke Program Modules

## Professional Development Modules

Each of these modules must be completed by councillors annually. They reflect a progressive approach to building the knowledge and skills to perform the role of a councillor over the course of the four-year term.

The knowledge learnt in Year 1 will be built on in each of the following years.

These modules can be delivered virtually or in person over two hours.

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### Renewing councillor group commitment to work as a team

This module helps build a positive working dynamic between councillors.

As part of this session, councillors will renew their commitment to work together as a team, reviewing their past performance and looking at where improved interactions are needed.

### Effectively participating in Council Meetings

This session will give councillors an understanding of meeting procedures and governance rules, including how to read and understand agendas and other briefing papers.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of how to engage in effective and respectful debate, negotiation practices and the gain the skills needed to effectively chair Council Meetings.

### CEO recruitment and performance management

This module will look at the councillor and CEO relationship. It will take councillors through effective performance management in line with organisational performance and accountability, as well as the importance of the CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy.

### Financial and Risk Management

This module will focus on effective financial and risk management and will build on the information, knowledge and skills relating to financial and risk management addressed during induction.

In addition, councillors will gain knowledge and skills relating to financial and risk management such as asset management.



## Effective Strategic Planning

This module will build on the information, knowledge and skills relating to strategic planning addressed during induction.

Councillors will also gain knowledge and skills relating to strategic planning such as:

- Setting and measuring outcomes
- Service planning, innovation and continuous improvement
- Collaborating with other agencies such as other councils, governments and statutory bodies and regional, state and national plans and policies
- Municipal public health and wellbeing plans

## Key integrity and accountability requirements

Building on the information knowledge and skills relating to integrity and accountability addressed during the councillor induction program, this session will look at councillor conduct and what happens when things go wrong.

It will include:

- Personal Interests
- Conflict of Interest
- Managing Confidential Information
- Managing Council Information
- Expenses, gifts and donations
- Any council policies that support good governance
- Reporting breaches of integrity and accountability requirements
- The roles of other integrity and accountability bodies and agencies

## Representing the diversity, interests and needs of the community

This session will look at the diversity of the community councillors serve, and council's obligations when it comes to key issues effecting the community.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of meaningful community engagement and its importance in the decision making process.

It will include:

- Community engagement and deliberative engagement
- Gender equality responsibilities including intersectional gender equity, Gender Impact Assessments, inclusive behaviour, sexual harassment and the role of bystanders and allies
- Cultural and linguistic diversity and inclusiveness
- Unconscious bias
- Engagement and reconciliation with the traditional owners of the land
- Effective leadership and advocacy
- Respectful interactions and dealing with difficult behaviours
- Engaging appropriate and effectively with diverse, marginalised and/or disadvantaged communities







## Effective Communication

This session will look at how councillors engage with the media, including council's media and social media policies.

It will include appropriate use of social media, as well as skills and knowledge in effective public speaking, influencing and negotiation.

## Creating and Maintaining a Safe Workplace

This module will take councillors through the fundamentals of occupational health and safety and psychosocial hazards. It will look at ways to prevent and address sexual harassment, including the importance of diversity and Inclusion.

Participants will be taken through ways to appropriately manage conflict and disputes, including processes under the councillor conduct framework.

## Introduction to Other Legislative Responsibilities

This module will give councillors an overview of their obligations under the bodies legislation which impact local government including:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

An aerial photograph of a construction site. A paved road curves through the center. On the left, several buildings are under construction, showing wooden roof frames. A red car, a white van, and a yellow truck are on the road. On the right, there's a large area of bare earth with some construction materials and a blue container. A white truck is parked on the right side of the road. The overall scene is one of active development.

## Victorian Planning System

This module will take councillors through the fundamentals of the Victorian planning system, including:

- The planning scheme and amendments
- Planning Permits
- Reviews and the role of VCAT
- The role of the planning minister and other bodies such as Planning Panels Victoria

## Statutory Planning

This session will look at the role of council's Planning Scheme and its impacts.

It will take councillors through powers of delegation and the processes to trigger the determination of applications by council.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of policies and processes related to interactions with developers, planning applicants and their representatives and objectors.

# Additional Mandatory Modules

These themes form the remainder of the mandatory modules which are spread across Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4. These are in addition to the 12 annual modules which must be completed by each councillor each year.

These modules are intended to up-skill councillors by ensuring they understand what is required of them and have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the role.

These modules are two-hour sessions and can be delivered in person or virtually.

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## Preventing Fraud and Corruption

### Year 1 & Year 3

This module will focus on Victoria's fraud and corruption framework and the policies and processes to prevent fraud and corruption.

Councillors will gain an understanding of how to identify and report fraud and corruption, including high-risk activities such as lobbying.

## Council and its Elected Roles

### Year 2

This module will review councillor obligations under the Local Government Act and look at the different roles of mayors, deputy mayors, councillors and the CEO and other council staff.

Councillors will gain an understanding of how councils are funded, the fundamentals of leadership and chairing committees.

## Responding to the needs of the Municipality

### Year 2

This module will give councillors the knowledge and understanding of the municipal community including key demographics, social, environmental and economic concerns, community organisations, sectors and communities of interest.

Councillors will look at ways to responding to community interactions, requests and complains including the Community Engagement Policy and legislative obligations around community consultation.

## Councillor Conduct Framework

### Year 2 & Year 4

This module will expand councillor's knowledge on misconduct, serious misconduct, gross misconduct and related processes.

It will refresh the councillor code of conduct, including standards of conduct and the misuse of position, directing staff and confidential information.

This session will also review internal resolution procedures, conflict resolution processes and occupational health and safety policies.

## Decision Making and Good Governance

### Year 2 & Year 4

This session will look at how council's make decisions including collective decision-making, council meetings and delegations. It will reinforce the importance of good governance, and the overarching governance principles.

Councillors will review policies and processes to support decision making such as councillor briefings, advisory committees and portfolios, as well as council meeting procedures, conflict of interest and delegated decision making.

The session will also look at election period policy including the appropriate use of council resources during an election period and councillor integrity in relation to the election.



# Bespoke Council Professional Development

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We understand that every council is different.

That's why in addition to the programs outlined above, the VLGA also offers bespoke training programs, designed in partnership with you to specifically meet the knowledge gaps of your councillors.

Our team of highly skilled local government professionals will work with you to customise a program that responds directly to the unique professional development needs of your council, delivered in a way which suits you.

## Why choose the VLGA for your professional development needs

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The VLGA provides relevant, accessible and comprehensive professional development tailored specifically for councillors and officers working in the Local Government sector.

- We are agile and adapt our service offering to meet the needs of councils across Victoria
- We are a trusted advisor and training provider to the Victorian Local Government sector and have been for more than 30 years
- All of the VLGA's professional development programs have strong alignment with the new mandatory requirements set out in the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*.
- Our programs are designed to inspire and support councils and councillors in good governance and set them up for success.
- All of our professional development programs can be customised to meet the unique requirements of your council.



# Continuous Learning Opportunities

The VLGA holds regular professional development events which enhance councillor capabilities and ensures elected representatives are well equipped to represent their communities.

## Lunch & Learn

Join us for a special members only professional development workshop for councillors as we discuss current issues and provide strategies and tools to help councillors perform at their best.

### Friday 4 April 2025

#### Gender Impact Assessments

This session will look at practical tools to identify gender disparities, align initiatives with equity goals, and create policies that promote gender-inclusive solutions.

### Friday 9 May 2025

#### Conflict Resolution & Effective Negotiation

Learn proven strategies to navigate disputes, build consensus, and foster collaboration. Gain practical tools to transform challenges into opportunities for stronger relationships and mutual success.

### Friday 13 June 2025

#### Community Engagement & Advocacy

This session will look at ways to build meaningful connections, amplify voices, and mobilise support for projects and initiatives. Explore tools for effective communication, partnership, and policy influence.

### Friday 19 September 2025

#### Managing Conflicts of Interest

Explore practical approaches to identify, address, and mitigate conflicts of interest. Learn best practices for disclosure, decision-making, and balancing competing interests to maintain trust and safeguard organisational integrity.

### Friday 24 October 2025

#### Audit and Risk Committees

This session will cover best practices for risk management, reporting, and regulatory compliance. Learn strategies to identify emerging risks, ensure accountability, and foster a culture of transparency and good governance.

**In addition to the *Councillor Professional Development Program* the VLGA also offers bespoke programs for council officers and leadership teams to ensure they're best placed to support their councillors.**

**This includes virtual sessions, face to face learning, workshops and coaching.**



## FastTrack 2025

### Friday 2 May 2025

*FastTrack* is the VLGA's signature event, bringing together sector leaders for a day of learning and networking.

*Leading with Integrity* will explore ways councillors lead responsibly, ensure good governance in decision making, and effectively represent the interests of their communities.

## Mayoral Leadership Program

### Friday 5 December 2025

The Mayoral Leadership Program is designed to equip mayors and deputy mayors to lead their council, as well as to satisfy the legislative requirements to undertake induction training within one month of election to the role.

*Reserve your place today!*

*Visit [www.vlga.org.au](http://www.vlga.org.au) for a full calendar of programs and events.*

# Pricing

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## Intensive Workshops (Half/Full Day)

**Members:**

**Half day session:**  
\$3000 per councillor group

**Full day session:**

\$5000 per councillor group

*Minimum of four council groups are required for the sessions to proceed.*

**Non-members:**

**Half day session:**  
\$6000 per councillor group

**Full day session:**

\$10,000 per councillor group

## Bespoke Professional Development Programs

A custom designed program which best suits the knowledge needs of your councillors, facilitated in house by a sector expert.

Quotes are available on request.

# Booking your Professional Development Program

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To secure councillor professional development for your council, please contact the VLGA on 9349 7999 or [vlga@vlga.org.au](mailto:vlga@vlga.org.au).

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**P 03 9349 7999**

**E [vlga@vlga.org.au](mailto:vlga@vlga.org.au)**

**[www.vlga.org.au](http://www.vlga.org.au)**